

## Opinion & Analysis

Elections against the background of rapidly expanding pandemic

FULL STORY ON Page 2

PACE to observe the parliamentary elections in Georgia

FULL STORY ON Page 2

## Economics

Turnava: 90% of the population to have access to natural gas by 2024



FULL STORY ON Page 3

# MIA: robber who broke into the BOG branch is Badri Esebua



PM: "It is a matter of dignity for the police to achieve the result the country is waiting for."

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the investigation has already identified the person involved in the robbery of the Bank of Georgia branch in Zugdidi on October 21st.

"As a result of operative and search measures, the identified person involved in the attack is Badri Esebua, born in 1988. To arrest him, the police are actively pursuing special operative, investigative, and search operations," said the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Vladimir Bortsvadze on October 26th.

As Bortsvadze explained in a conversation with the media, the culprit was identified the same night. He denied the information that the arrested Esebua escaped from the law enforcers.

On October 25th, the MIA stated that the robber had already been identified and called on the media not to reveal his identity. The main channel reported the same day that the robber was Badri Esebua, who according to them is an active military man.

"Esebua is not enlisted in the Defense Forces-he is not a current military serviceman," the Ministry of Defense told the media.

Esebua's father says that he last saw his son on October 21st and that he was going to see a doctor in Tbilisi. The father says Esebua will return home in Zugdidi "tomorrow or the day after tomorrow."

"It was 5 o'clock, I was coming from work, he had to go to Tbilisi to see a doctor," said Esebua's father.

Until now, the investigation was underway under the articles of robbery, hostage-taking, and illegal purchase-storage-carrying of firearms. At the moment, the

investigation is underway under Articles 323, 236, and 329 of the Criminal Code, which stipulates a terrorist act, hostage-taking for terrorist purposes, and illegal purchase, possession, and carrying of firearms.

The robber entered the bank on Octo-

ber 21st and took hostages. Soon, one of the hostages Irakli Kvaratskhelia contacted the Main Channel as instructed by the perpetrator. Kvaratskhelia said that there were 19 hostages in the room where he was with the robber.

CONTINUED ON Page 2



Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (Official publication)

According to Gomelauri, the operation to detain Badri Esebua may last for a month.



# Elections against the background of rapidly expanding pandemic

By MALKHAZ MATSABERIDZE

With less than 10 days left before the October 31, 2020 parliamentary elections, pre-election tensions are growing. Both the Georgian Dream and the opposition are talking about their inevitable victory. One of the key features of the upcoming election will be that it will end up in the midst of a growing Covid-19 epidemic. This epidemic is also discussed in the context of elections.

In the spring of 2020, when the Covid virus first appeared in Georgia, the government took drastic measures to prevent the spread of the virus, which was not widespread in the world and in neighboring countries. Although the ban policy has dealt a severe blow to the economy, the government's rating has clearly risen.

Able to deal with the epidemic, it announced the implementation of a large-scale social assistance program in the run-up to the parliamentary elections. It seemed that the pressure of the epidemic would be useful for the government and would contribute to its victory.

The summer was relatively 'calm' in terms of the epidemic. In the fall, just before the elections, the epidemic in Georgia began to grow rapidly. Cases of daily infections have been reported in the tens, then in the hundreds, and in the last few days have exceeded a thousand, and this unfortunate figure sets

new records every day.

Some epidemiologists, who expected the "second wave" of the epidemic in the fall, now say that it is the "first wave", the peak of which is expected somewhere by the end of December. The country's healthcare system is already working on the "edge of endurance" and is causing more and more dissatisfaction among ordinary citizens, who are growing in the feeling that if they get sick, they will have to deal with it alone.

The widespread epidemic affects the previously obtained reputation of the government as trustworthy to handle the virus and becomes the cause of sharp criticism. According to the opposition, in the spring the government took inadequate measures to kill the country's economy, did not use the status of a 'green country' in the summer, and in the fall it became clear that it was not actually prepared for the expected wave of the epidemic.

The government is unlikely to score any points in the "successful fight against the epidemic." However, the opposition fears that the government will still use the pandemic to its advantage. In particular, it is expected that in the conditions of the widespread epidemic, a significant part of the voters will not participate in the elections. Some experts suggest that the coronavirus will reduce voter turnout by 10-15%.

The government will use its administrative resources to mo-

bilize its supporters and thus gain an advantage over the opposition, and after the elections, referring to the same epidemic, will introduce emergency measures and will not allow opposition protests.

On October 15, the total number of potential voters to be headed by the CEC was announced - 3,558,291 people. According to a study, the total number of participants in the elections is actually about 2.3 million will be.

The idea of postponing elections is sometimes voiced by a few experts and opposition members, but government officials categorically refuse. The Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia stated unequivocally that the elections will not be postponed. Obviously,

the Georgian Dream has discussed the issue of postponing the elections. Postponing the elections would guarantee the government's defeat in the elections as the process would have to be held against the background of a large-scale epidemic and a severe economic crisis. "In case of postponement of the elections, the defeat of the current ruling party will be inevitable," say experts.

Today, four days before the elections, the government insists that, according to their polls, the Georgian Dream will win convincingly and that no coalition government will be needed. This version agrees with the research conducted under Rustavi-2. Another poll commissioned by the opposition Main Channel reveals

that a majority of voters will support the opposition and that the opposition will be able to form a coalition government (the results of all three polls are attached in the article).

Part of the opposition political parties, which are expected to cross the 1% threshold, rule out forming a coalition with the United National Movement if its prime ministerial candidate is Mikheil Saakashvili.

The situation in Georgia is so difficult that even in the short period before the elections, significant changes in the mood of the voters may occur. In the run-up to the election, we will likely receive another series of polls and new election surprises to influence voters.

## Pre-election poll results

(Shows parties that cross the 1% threshold according to the survey)

Political Parties	IPSOS Research via Main Channel	British Research company via Rustavi 2 channel	Georgian Dream's Research via Free Georgia
The Georgian Dream	26,2	55,6	36,3
The United National Movement- The United Opposition	17,8	19,8	26,4
Strategy Agmashenebeli- G.Vashadze	5,3	5,1	5,3
European Georgia	5,1	5,2	8,5
Lelo	2,7	3,1	5,3
Girchi	2,7	2,1	1,7
Labour Party	2,1	2,7	2,0
Alliance of Patriots	1,2	3,8	4,2
Free Georgia - Kakha Kukava			3,2
Unanimous Georgia - Nino Burjanadze			1,6
Citizens - Aleko Elisashvili			1,5

## MIA: robber who broke into the BOG branch is Badri Esebua

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

Kvaratskhelia stated that the attacker was armed to the teeth with a machine gun, a pistol,

### Weather

Wednesday, October 28

Day Partly Cloudy

High: 19°C

Night Partly Cloudy

Low: 10°C

Thursday, October 29

Day Clear

High: 22°C

Night Clear

Low: 10°C

and a grenade.

The robber demanded \$ 500,000 and a safe passage. At approximately 22:00, the robber left with three hostages - one of whom was Avtandil Galdava, director of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Police Department.

Hours later, the attacker released the three hostages and fled.

## PACE to observe the parliamentary elections in Georgia

Strasbourg, 27.10.2020 – A 9-member delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), led by Tiny Kox (Netherlands, UEL), will travel to Georgia from 29 October to 1 November to observe the conduct of the parlia-

mentary elections, alongside observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, NATO Parliamentary Assembly and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The delegation will meet, in

particular, representatives of political parties, the Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, as well as representatives of civil society and the media, before observing the ballot on 31 October.

A representative of the Venice Commission – the Council of Europe's group of independent legal experts – will provide legal support during the visit.

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A joint press conference is scheduled in Tbilisi on Sunday 1 November (place and time to be confirmed).

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# Turnava: 90% of the population to have access to natural gas by 2024



“By 2024, 2,800,000 citizens of Georgia will have 24-hour water supply,” Gakharia said.

Natia Turnava held a presentation on the report of providing natural gas and plans in Tsalenjikha.

BY NATALIA KOCHIASHVILI

Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia and the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Natia Turnava held a presentation about providing gas supply and general plans in Samegrelo yesterday.

“Natural gas had never been available in Tsalenjikha before we introduced it here,” Turnava said, noting that 39 km

of supply pipe has been laid in the ‘complex terrain.’ The minister announced that by the end of 2021 all communities - 49 settlements in Tsalenjikha municipality would have natural gas.

The minister spoke about providing natural gas to settlements located along the dividing line of the occupied territories. According to her, 74 such settlements have access to gas (a total of 17,000 families).

According to Turnava, within the

framework of the state program for 2019-2021, 384 settlements will be provided for gas in Georgia, covering more than 90% of the population.

According to the minister, gas is supplied to more than 312 000 families in more than 1000 settlements. Upon completion of the 2019-2021 gasification plan, by the end of 2021, 90,000 more customers will have access to the gas distribution network, which is a high rate if compared with other such mountainous countries.

At the presentation, the Prime Minister announced that the next four years

would be devoted to reconstructing the country; addressing all the shortcomings, and looking like a European state. He also noted that in the last eight years, the government of Georgia has spent ₾ 23 billion on system infrastructure projects.

“The Georgian government will spend twice as much in 2021-2024. The money will be spent on roads, gas, water, schools, kindergartens - all of which should bring our daily lives closer to European standards”, said Gakharia.

According to him, ₾ 659 million will be spent on providing gas in Georgia in 2013-2021.

# Vani Archeological Museum launches new life

From October 22, the renewed museum for two months will play host to visitors for free!

Throughout Europe, Georgia is the only country where two new museums were opened during the pandemic - Bolnisi Regional and Vani Archeological museums.

Georgian National Museum Otar Lordkipanidze Vani Archeological Museum is one of the first museums set up on a settlement. It was founded in 1985 according to the project of architect Giorgi Lezhava. The museum named after its founder, assuming absolutely new image, will begin a completely new life in 2020.

The history of the Vani settlement which covers almost the whole first millennium BC is an archeological monument of world importance. From 8th-7th centuries BC till 1st century BC Vani was the religious centre of Kolkheti – the country of the Golden Fleece.

There are numerous artifacts discovered in the Vani settlement and its environs preserved in the museum collections. These items date from 8th-1st centuries BC inclusive. Materials discovered in the Vani settlement have crucial importance for studying antiquity.

Using new technologies and installations the permanent exhibition of the renewed Vani Museum showcases Kolkhian jewelry from wealthy burial grounds, which are irrefutable proof of "Rich in gold" Kolkheti reality. At the same time, it will be the first demonstration of manufacturing techniques and



National Geographic Magazine Georgia: Tbel Abuseridze

knowledge of the ancient Kolkhians about mining and processing of gold.

Yet along with bronze sculptures discovered in the previous century, the hidden hoard of Hellenistic unique bronze lamps was found. They were temple utensils and once again asserts the importance of Vani as the temple city of 2nd-1st centuries BC.

In the building corresponding with international standards are presented permanent and temporary exhibitions. The modern infrastructure gave us the opportunity to organize funds, scientific laboratories, auditorium, library-mediatech, and public space (café, museum shop, open veranda) in keeping with modern standards.

In the renewed museum’s auditorium which operates in order to keep up close relations with society and public education, with the participation of the leading scientists worldwide, “Vani International Symposia” will be launched anew. Symposia were held regularly since founding the museum and were dedicated to issues of the Black sea area ancient history and archeology.

The renewed museum will play an important role in the field of perception of our country, culture, national identity, and self-awareness. It will also help with the development of regional tourism.

Rehabilitation of the museum was carried out by the Government of Georgia with support from the World Bank.

Partners of the museum: Shelby White; Leon Levy Foundation; TBC.

The museum’s architectural project and exhibition design were worked out through the cooperation of: the German company “Ellis Williams Architects”, scenographer Lina Lopez and the Georgian National Museum Team.